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SONGS
OF
LOVE
AND
DEATH



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SONGS

OF

LOVE AND DEATH.

BY

GEORGE ERIC MACKAY.
II



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TO
THE RIGHT HON.
SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON,
BART. M.P.

MY DEAR SIR EDWARD,

I AVAIL myself joyfully of your kind permission to dedicate my book to you. Most sincerely do I trust that in thus putting forth my claims to literary succession, I may escape the charge of boldness or presumption.

All that the book contains is now published for the first time, with three exceptions, the 'Lass of Abenhall,' the 'Three Sisters,' and the 'Wasted Life.' The latter is here introduced

considerably curtailed; some of the verses having set up for themselves and formed separate poems. I need not say how much I shall be flattered if you will accept this dedication as a tribute of my heartfelt esteem and admiration. To me it will be a memorial of many happy days passed in your society.

I must not let this opportunity pass of thanking you for the favour you have bestowed on my writings, and for the criticisms—cruel only to be kind—with which you warned me of certain faults both of omission and commission. I have written secretly and for the love of the thing, as one writes a letter home; and with me Poetry has been a passion, not an art.

I find myself to-day in the position of a merchant whose vessel, laden with merchandise, is on the point of sailing for a distant land. I tremble to think what rocks of criticism my ship may stumble against, what adverse winds

it may encounter, what a troublesome voyage it may make. You, however, have wished me 'God speed ;' and I take leave of this my first venture with a hopeful heart.

Allow me to congratulate you on your restoration to health, and to wish you even greater happiness than that you now enjoy in the possession of a glorious fame, and the respect and admiration of those who have the privilege of your acquaintance.

Believe me to remain,

My dear Sir Edward,

Your sincerely attached friend,

GEORGE ERIC MACKAY.



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SONGS OF LOVE AND DEATH.



THE SECRETS OF THE STREAM.

I

O STREAMLET clear,
Dear Nature's child,
Whence com'st thou here
So soft and mild ?
Across the rocks
Thou glidest by,
And shak'st the locks
Of willows high,
Reflecting every vernal grace
That shines athwart thy childish face.

II

' I come, thou sad
Inquiring boy,
From mountains clad
With fields of joy,
Where shepherd maids,
With purple frocks,
In distant glades
Attend their flocks,
And lead the goat and lambkin dear
To drink at noon my waves so clear.'

III

O streamlet young,
So fair of speech,
Whose wave's thy tongue
On pebbly beach,
Whose friendly words
My heart console,
Like songs of birds
In time of dole,

Now, tell me, stream, so blythe and gay,
What sights hast seen this livelong day ?

IV

‘ I’ve seen, thou strange,
Thou thoughtful friend,
In all my range
From bend to bend,
Or down the ridge
By Darly Dell,
From bridge to bridge,—
If tongue could tell,—
More sights of joy than poets sing,
Or statesmen tell to queen or king.

V

‘ And first of all,
In days of bliss,
I’ve felt the thrall
Of maiden’s kiss,
When children young
Upon my brink,

With prattling tongue,
Stooped down to drink ;
Or launched at eve the boat so brave
To tempt my silvery, gliding wave.'

VI

But hast thou seen,
Thou stream so true,
My Kate—my queen—
With eyes of blue,
That royal girl,
With radiant hair ?
‘ Yes, by that curl
Which thou dost wear,
That sunbeam twisted into braid,
I’ve seen thy fine, thy friendly maid.

VII

‘ She drinks my wave
From day to day ;
She comes to lave
Her limbs in play,

On my green banks ;
Ah ! were I knight,
Such maiden pranks
I 'd soon requite ! '
Be still ! perchance some future day
I, too, may see my Kate at play.

VIII

And then, dear stream,
If all be well,
Some happier dream
My tongue shall tell
Of love and joy
Perfected then.
' Thou thoughtful boy,
To yonder glen
I haste—I haste—I finely run !
I seek the sea at set of sun.'

THE STATUE.

I

SEE where my lady stands,
 Lifting her lustrous hands ;
 Here let me bow ;
 Image of truth and grace !
 Girl with the angel-face !
 Earth was no resting-place
 For such as thou.

II

Ah, thou unhappy stone,
 Make now thy sorrows known—
 Make known thy longing ;
 Thou art the form of one
 Whom I, with hopes undone,
 Buried at set of sun—
 All the friends thronging.

III

Thou art some Vision bright
Lost out of Heaven at night,
Far from thy race;
Oft when the others dance,
Come I, with wistful glance,
Fearful lest thou, perchance,
Leave the dark place.

IV

No : thou wilt never flee—
Earth has a charm for thee :
Why should we sever ?
Years have I seen thee so,
Making pretence to go,
Lifting thy arms of snow—
Voiceless for ever !

V

Who comes to spoil my rest ?
Who would my grief molest ?
Let him go weep !
This is my sanctum door,
Sacred to love and lore,
Sacred to dreams of yore,
Let him go weep !

VI

Here bring I all my cares,
Here sob and say my prayers,
 While the bells toll.
O thou belovèd saint !
Let not my courage faint,
Let not a shame or taint
 Injure my soul !

SYLVIA.



YES, I tell thee, brother-poet,
There are fairies with us yet ;
There are maidens (for I know it)
Who defy us to forget ;—
And we think them pure and peerless,
And we love them, and are fearless !

II

So, in boyhood's dream of glory,
Every landscape glitters fair :
Every tower and turret hoary
Seems a bower for love to share :
Men and women at a glance
Look like heroes of romance.

III

Sylvia seemed a Queen of Fancies,
Born of sunbeams in a brook :
Where she stayed were necromances,
So the earth her fancy took ;
When she spoke the breezes broke,
And the air with rapture shook !

IV

Well, I loved her : but no matter :
Fairer things have fallen ere this ;
Trust which frenzy could not shatter
Broke beneath a traitor's kiss.
I had faith in childish quips,
Love and lies, and laughing lips.

V

I believed a blue-eyed maiden
Equal-born of Saints and Kings ;
Doomed to earth (though fit for Aiden),
Such, I thought, but wanted wings.
I could curse her, did I dare,
If her face were not so fair !

VI

Fool ! I prized her as a sister,
Though with more than brother's flame ;
Spared her—spared her when I kissed her,
Lest my love should be her shame.
Now the first-come may entice—
Every kiss has got its price !

THE LASS OF ABENHALL.

I

GOD save the Lass of Abenhall !
She hath my heart in maiden thrall :
And for her eyes so bonny blue
Some deed of danger I will do ;
And for her lips so fair and fine
I 'll shed my blood like German wine !

II

She hath no castles by the sea,
Or belted knights on bended knee ;
She hath no gems or jewels rare,
Or any gold except her hair :
But she shall be a minstrel's bride,
And tune his harp at evening tide.

III

The high-born dames in silk and fur
Shall turn their heads to look at her :
The proudest maidens of them all
Shall praise the Lass of Abenhall ;
The king upon his golden throne
Shall sigh to call the maid his own.

IV

And he shall send her jewels rare,
To have a ringlet of her hair ;
And make her Lady of the Land,
To kiss her white and bonny hand :
But she shall be a minstrel's bride,
And tune his harp at evening tide !

THE TRYSTING TREE.

I LOVE thee, oh! thou lonely tree,
So stately-tall and fair to see.

In olden time
I came to climb
Thy friendly boughs to play with thee.

II

Beneath thy blythesome shade I met
That blue-eyed wonder, Margaret.

In whispered speech
We plighted each
Those holy vows that bind us yet.

III

And now I'll hedge thee round and round,
And make thee stand on sacred ground ;
I'll strew the grass
With flowers, and pass
The weeds away that there abound.

IV

I'll carve a name upon thy bark ;
I'll make thee mine by that dear mark ;
And fame shall cling
To thee, and sing
Eternal songs like some glad lark !

V

Oh ! many and many a heart will ache,
And many a lip its farewell take ;
And many a vow,
Untrue I trow !
Keep many a fluttering bird awake.

VI

But flourish, flourish, firm and free,
Thou pride, thou splendour of the lea ;
 Our babes shall praise
 In future days,
And call thee Margaret's Trysting Tree !

ADDIO.

I

ADDIO ! Addio ! thou dearest and best !
 With thy bosom so pure with the blood of the blest ;
 Any angels that meet thee on missions of love
 Will be loth to return to their comrades Above.

II

Addio ! Addio ! ah, why should I flee ?
 'T is the voice of my country is calling for me ;
 'T is the finger of duty—remorseless—unkind—
 But the heart of the lover lies bleeding behind.

III

Addio ! Addio ! in tears I depart,
 With a weight like a stone in the place of a heart :
 And I know while I weep in such exquisite pain,
 That we never shall meet in this wide world again !

IV

Addio ! Addio ! be happy—be proud ;
Win the whispers of One, not the shouts of the crowd ;
Ah, be silent—be still ! she will never forget ;
The belov'd of her youth will be dear to her yet.

V

Addio ! Addio ! I glide from the place ;
I have loosened my neck from the tender embrace.
Addio ! Addio ! thou dearest and best,
Perhaps we may meet in the land of the blest !

MY LOVE IS A LADY FAIR.

I

My Love is a lady fair and free,
 And she comes from a kingdom of the sea ;
 And her eyes are daggers to strike my breast,
 And rob my spirit of peace and rest ;
 But my Love—my Love is a lady fair !

II

A youthful warrior, warm and young,
 She takes me prisoner with her tongue ;
 Keeping me captive on *parole*,
 Till paid the ransom of my soul ;
 But my Love—my Love is a lady fair !

III

I swear the foeman armed for war,
 From *cap-à-piè*, with many a scar,
 More mercy shows, to prostrate foe,
 Than she who deals me never a blow.

But my Love— my Love is a lady fair !

IV

Her glittering eyes do make me swerve,
And prayers and tears her purpose serve ;
And suppliant hands more conquests gain
Than bickering fists of boor or swain.

But my Love—my Love is a lady fair !

A WASTED LIFE.

I

I STAKED my life upon a vow—
 That vow was false and all is o'er—
 I kissed the virgin's beaming brow,
 And called her mine, though mine no more.
 I thought at least an oath might be
 A word of weight for her and me.

II

I thought a child had childish grace ;
 I thought a friend had friendly care ;
 I thought a pure and radiant face
 Might also mean the soul was fair.
 Alas ! too late the truth we find
 That Love was justly painted blind.

III

The woodman's axe may love the tree ;
The snake may love the breast it stings ;
The storm may love the ships at sea
What time the mermaid sobs and sings —
But such a love let cowards know
To love the hand that lays them low.

IV

For fallen fruits have dust within ;
And faded flowers have tainted breath ;
And bauble-crowns are hard to win,
And laurels have the taste of death ;
The Church's vows are bought and sold,
And hearts have found their price in gold.

V

Shame on thee, woman ! Shame on thee !
Before them all I saw thee stand ;
I saw thee bend thy recreant knee,
I saw thee raise thy jewelled hand.
'Twas brave ! 'twas brave ! with that proud face
To say such things in such a place.

VI

But 'twill not pass ; the wedding gear—

The orange-flowers were empty shows ;—
I will not curse thee all the year ;—

I wish thee where the cypress grows ;—
For lying thus, with thy cold head,
Thou still might'st fill an honest bed.

VII

Go ; take thy pride to beauty's haunts,

And show what gold may still attain :
A maiden's love ; a mother's wants !

Yes, cleanse thy robe of every stain
Earth-made ; and still 'twill seem as mean ;
Earth's waters will not wash thee clean !

* * * * *

VIII

And where is he—the wronged—the lost—

Who loved and wept ? He weepeth still ;
His heart—that gem of priceless cost—

Is marred because 'twas used so ill ;
And now he gives a piece to One,
And vows he loves, but loveth none.

IX

In godless brawls he spends his nights,
And feigns the fire he cannot feel ;
For youth will sigh for vain delights,
Although the heart be cold as steel ;
The withered wreath—the broken bowl—
Proclaim the wreck of such a soul !

THE SONG OF THE MINNESINGER.



I

Of lordly race—of courage high—
I bear a name that cannot die ;
A name of dread—a word of woe—
To scare the legions of the foe.

Tra-la-la-la !

II

In tilt and tourney famed afar
My crest was called the Silver Star ;
No maid at play—no matron old—
But knows the name of Ralf the Bold.

Tra-la-la-la !

III

I bound my sword with maiden's hair,
And called it Geraldine the Fair ;
By all the Saints ! it served me well,
And blushed for every foe that fell.

Tra-la-la-la !

IV

I gained my spurs in South of Francee,
Right well I used the sword and lance ;
To earth I brought the proudest foe,
And laid the Flower of Battles low.

Tra-la-la-la !

V

The bravest man—the king of knights—
Is he who sings as well as fights ;
Who tunes his harp to lady's ear,
And tells the tale of love and fear.

Tra-la-la-la !

VI

Now Geraldine was fair as day,
She loved me more than tongue can say ;

And Geraldine's rejected knight,
He challenged me in the broad daylight.
Tra-la-la-la !

VII

Oh ! he was fair my foeman tall,
As he lay beneath the castle wall ;
Oh ! he was fair as he lay there,
With a rank red riband around his hair.

Tra-la-la-la !

VIII

His wounds, I wis, were sad to see,
But then he bore them all for me ;—
With favours fell I decked him well,
To prove my love's great constancy !

Tra-la-la-la !

IX

I kissed his forehead as he lay low ;
I left his body to feed the crow ;
And over the moor I hastened on,
To marry the maid of Asteron !

x

LOVED AND LOST.

I

'Tis here the kirk—'tis here the cot—
 'Tis here my darling lived of old ;
 I trace with tears the sacred spot,
 And dream of days whose tale is told.
 Alas ! where once I knelt to her
 Now stands a silent sepulchre.

II

What though she loved the lawn, the lake,
 And all the gathering landscape wild ?
 Was that to say the ground should break
 And hide the lost, the lovely child ?
 The girl was laid full lowly there,
 And all the birds broke out in prayer !

III

But clouds have fallen on Nature's face,
And garden-graves are torn and strewn ;
The fields have lost their crowning grace,
Because the birds are out of tune ;
They chirp and chaunt from tree to tree,
And chide me for my constancy !

I CRY TO HER.

I

I CRY to her ; she will not rise ;
She hears me call but cannot speak ;
The fire is quenched in her fine eyes,
Her lovely limbs are worn and weak.
Her dainty hands are filled with dust ;
Her heart is not so sad I trust !

II

Ah well ! ah well ! the world is such—
The softest bed's a burial stone.
That form so fair we prized so much,
How pale—how cold its smile hath grown !
And deadlier yet 'twill seem, I wis,
When we have ta'en our parting-kiss.

III

And then our foes may frown perchance !
And then our tears may fall, may fall !
And friends who came to join the dance
Will stoop to bear the mourner's pall.
Ah, comrades ! wheresoe'er ye roam,
Ye cannot bring the loved-one home !

HERE WAILS THE WIND.

I

HERE wails the wind, here waves the grass—
Here sing the birds their songs of praise ;
But here no more her feet will pass
Belovèd, lost in lonely ways.
In dreamful trance I still live on,
And moan for maiden dead and gone.

II

She knew her friends ; she went her way ;
She did her will, and that sufficed.
So fast she broke the bands of clay
'Twas thought she had some holy tryste ;
Some heavenly mate, of high estate,
Who called her home and could not wait.

III

Oh hush ! my heart ; be still ! be still !
'Tis not for thee to moan and sigh ;
Let tempests howl, let winds be shrill,
She feels them not, she lives on High.
Her house is on the silent coasts,
Her home is with the Lord of Hosts.

SYMBOLS.

I

WE parted : I gave her wild flowers—
 Wild flowers that wither so fast ;
 Ah, fool that I was ! She accepted the symbol,
 And told me its meaning at last.

II

She wept : it is true ! it is true !
 But the Wild Flower of Passion how fast
 It withered and died ! She accepted the symbol,
 And told me its meaning at last.

AWAY! I DARE NOT THINK OF JOY.



I

AWAY ! I dare not think of joy !
On sorrow's breast I'll sleep to-night.

The infant weeps its broken toy ;
The maiden mourns her broken plight ;
But I who own a broken heart,
I should not play so wild a part.

II

For what is faith ? and what is truth ?

A dream, a breath, a flattering name.
And what are hope and joy and youth,
And all the friends the poets claim ?
Not much I fear ! A girl may blight
A whole existence in a night.

III

Poor fools, we say, to love so well !

But then we know such things must be ;
There scarcely rings a wedding bell

But some poor fool is on his knee ;
And I, poor wretch, I write my rhymes,
I almost think I weep at times !

GIFTS RETURNED.



I

HOPE and JOY are withered leaves ;
Binding words are idle bands.
Once the lip of love deceives,
What's the good of clasping hands ?
What's the good of tie and token
When the vows they meant are broken ?

II

Sell thy favours otherwhere !
Market-love I will not keep.
What care I for golden hair ?
Take it back and let me weep !
If I keep it, girl, 'twill stain me,
As of old it did enchain me.

III

Once I thought thee good and true—
Now I see thee, what thou art ;
Golden hair and eyes of blue
Cannot screen a worthless heart.
I who loved thee out of measure,
Lo ! I leave thee for my pleasure.

I TELL THEE, FRIEND.



I

I TELL thee, friend, that, sick at heart,
I dare not bid my fears depart.
Do foes revile ? Do friends rebel ?
I know not ;—no, I cannot tell.

II

For see ! the good old days are dead ;
And hands are wrung, and tears are shed.
We know the brave can vanquish pain ;—
But then we know we loved in vain !

III

O vaunt not thou the thing they do,
'Tis but the lawyers now that woo ;—
We let the sacred flame expire,
And warm the hearth with common fire.

IV

Is this not sad ? Some think it so ;
But then we learn to bear the blow.
I sing my songs from day to day,
And laugh to keep my tears away !

THE THREE SISTERS.

I

In Logan Braes, by shores of Dee,
There lived three sisters fair to see.

II

The first, with locks of raven hair,
Was proud and tall and debonair ;
The next had eyes of bonny blue,
Like chinks to let the sunlight through ;
But oh, the third—the third was such,
I thrilled and throbbed beneath her touch.

III

The first was false for golden shame :
She married a miser old and lame.
The second, she sinned with Lord Le-Rone,
And now she lieth in churchyard lone.
The other lives on, but better ('tis said)
For the weal of her soul if she were dead.

IV

O Kate, my hinny, how fares 't wi' thee ?
Are thy children bonny and blythe to see ?
Ah well, good lack ! no child I ween
In this lone house has e'er been seen.

V

And thou, poor Marion, foolish lass,
How fares 't wi' thee in the churchyard grass ?
Is this thy dwelling so cold and dim ?
'Tis Death has taken thee home with him.
Ah, many a cottager's hut, I wis,
Were a happier home for thee than this.

VI

Think of it, lord ! and rend thy hair ;
Thy crime has wrought this child's despair ;
Had'st thou been true to Love's dear debt,
This grass—this grave were empty yet !

VII

Of three fair sisters, two survive ;
Yet both, God wot, have sins to shrive ;
The one has given her peace for pelf,
The other for shame has sold herself.

VIII

Of all the three it were better to be
The corpse beneath the Churchyard Tree !

G. B.

I

'Tis a story of a lover,
'Tis a legend to be sung
In the gloaming, under cover,
By a minstrel who is young—

By a singer who has passion, and who sways us with
his tongue.

II

I who know it, think upon it,
Not unhappy, though in tears ,
And I gather in a sonnet
All the glory of the years :
And I kiss and clasp a shadow when the substance dis-
appears.

III

Sweet ! I see her as she faced me
 In the sinless, summer days ;
 When her little hands embraced me,
 And I trembled at her gaze :
 Thinking — thinking, will she love me when we walk in
 other ways ?

IV

Will she cling to me as kindly
 When the childish faith is lost ?
 Will she pray for me as blindly
 Or but weigh the wish and cost,
 Looking back on our lost Eden from the girlhood she
 has cross'd ?

V

Oh ! I swear by all I honour—
 By the graves that I endow—
 By the grace I set upon her—
 That I meant the early vow,—
 Meant it much as men and women mean the same thing
 spoken now.

VI

But her maiden troth is broken,
And her mind is ill at ease,
And she sends me back no token
From her home beyond the seas;

And I know, though naught is spoken, that she thanks
me on her knees.

VII

Yes, for pardon freely granted ;
For she wronged me, understand ;
And my life is disenchanted,
And I wander through the land,

With the sorrows of sad morrows that await me in a
band.

VIII

Hers was sweetest of sweet faces,
Hers the tenderest eyes of all !
In her hair she had the traces
Of a heavenly coronal ;

Bringing sunshine to sad places where the sunlight could
not fall.

* * * * *

IX

She was fairer than a vision ;
Like a vision, too, has flown :
I, who fired at her decision,
Lo ! I languish here alone :
And I tremble when I tell you that my anger was my
own.

X

Not for her, sweet sainted creature !
Should I curse her to her face ?
Could I look on form and feature
And dispute the inner grace ?
Like a little wax Madonna she was holy in the place.

XI

And I told her, in mad fashion,
That I loved her—would incline

All my life to this one passion,
And would kneel as at a shrine !
And would love her late and early, and would teach her
to be mine.

XII

Now, in dreams alone I meet her,
With my lowly human praise ;
She is sweeter and completer,
And she smiles on me always ;
But I dare not rise and greet her as I did in early days.

NORMAN.



I

A song he sings of Love and Death,
And strikes his harp with 'bated breath ;
For Love, he saith,
Is one with Death,
And Passion comes but once he saith ;
And thus he sings his golden songs :—

II

' She smiled on me like beckoning dreams
(And sure her blood was of that race).
I should have kissed her hand, it seems,
And only gazed upon her face.

III

For she is great and I am small,
And she is fair and pure and proud ;
And I, should judgment on me fall,
Would not be fit for my death-shroud.'

* * * * *

And thus he sings his golden songs !

NORMAN'S SECOND SONG.

I

THE birds that flap the ocean-foam
 Are happier far than I can be ;
 They seek at noon my lonely home,
 But ere the dark are back with thee.

II

The gardener's boy that tends thy flowers,
 Unconscious wight ! how fine his lot ;
 He meets thee daily in the bowers,
 And I, poor wretch, I meet thee not.

III

The ragged beggar in the road—
 The poor old man whom mortals shun !—
 He wanders near thy blest abode,
 And thanks thee when the weeks are done.

IV

Thrice blessed they ; though poor their birth,
They gaze on thee but rarely dine ;
And I—beside a loveless hearth
I drink the best of German wine !

THE LITTLE GRAVE.

I

A LITTLE mound of earth
Is all the land I own ;
Death gave it me—five feet by three—
And marked it with a stone.

II

My home—my garden grave,
Where most I long to go ;
The ground is mine by right divine,
And Heaven will have it so !

III

For here my darling sleeps,
Ah yes ! in doleful hut ;
No lock or latch below the thatch,
The door untimely shut.

IV

Here Beauty, Love, and Joy
With her in silence dwell ;
As Eastern slaves are thrown in graves
Of kings remembered well.

V

But here let no man come,
With vain and false endeavour.
Who lieth here is cold and dumb,
Her dust is mine for ever !

WILD LOVE.



I

COULD I forfeit, at a shrine,
Half my life to lengthen thine,
Soul and body I would sever
So my love might live for ever !
Then to send my soul to bliss,
Thou might'st kill me with a kiss.

II

But I pine ; I will not die
Till on thy dear breast I lie.

Not for kingdoms will I perish
Till I clasp the heart I cherish ;
So, till soul and body sever,
I will live and love for ever !

ELEANORE.



I

THE flowers of earth are faded all ;
 The bleak winds blow, the snow flakes fall,
 Eleanore ;
 To thee I turn : thou art my bower,
 Thou breathest beauty like a flower,
 Thou smilest like a summer hour,
 Eleanore !

II

I wish to weep, but am not sad,
 I am too happy to be glad,
 Eleanore.
 I wish to weep when thou art here,
 I faint, I hold my breath for fear ;
 Art thou some phantom wandering near,
 Eleanore ?

III

Oh ! take me to thy bosom fair,
Oh ! cover me with thy radiant hair,

Eleanore.

There let me lie when I am dead,
Those morning-beams about me spread,
The glory of thy face o'erhead,

Eleanore !

BLONDALINE.



I

I KNOW a lady, fine and fair,
Whose locks to sunbeams I compare ;
And deem her eyes the break of morn,
Whose glance would put the sun to scorn.

II

I deem her voice a warbling sprite,
Whose tenderest notes are heard at night ;
A nightingale behind a grove,
Whose every accent speaks of love.

III

Some Nature's wonder she must be,
Or Dryad maiden from a tree ;
Or dream that has forgot the wand
That wafts her back to fairyland.

IV

How fair she bends with heaving breast
And hair like sunlight in the west ;
Her beauteous arms towards me thrown,
As joy had changed her into stone.

V

But then, ere yet the pulse could beat
Three maddening times, in youthful heat,
How fast she flies (with her fine eyes
Lit up) love-lit to my lone seat !

VI

Ah me ! ah me ! too fair, too bright,
Too wistful-wild for mortal sight ;
The hungry wolf more pity shows
On mountain-heights among the snows.

VII

Her eyes and lips, to frenzy driven,
Entice my soul from earth to heaven ;
And then to spoil my perfect bliss,
She mocks me with her loveliness !

FAIR AND FALSE.

I

THY face is fair—would 'twere not so !
 Thy smile is sweet—ah, tempting smile !
 Thy voice is kind and soft and low,
 And all thy words are free from guile ;
 At least, 'twould seem such things were true,
 But then the thoughts are hid from view !

II

I cannot weep ; I wish thee well ;
 Though tears have fallen, 'twas not for this.
 There is no need that I should tell
 How coldly came thy parting kiss ;
 Who kissed thee last ? Whose fingers drew
 Thy Gorgon ringlets through and through ?

III

Well, go thy ways; thy life's thine own;
I ask thee not what deeds thou'st wrought—
What hearts Medusa-like to stone
Thou'st turned or e'er the fight was fought.
A time will come for every plea,
And mine I doubt will plead for me!

BE STILL, MY SOUL.



Be still, my soul ; have faith ; believe !
Would'st weep a toy ? would'st mourn a flower ?
Let dreams dissolve—let friends deceive—
The birds come back to Beauty's bower.
Ah, yes ! the birds come back to sing,
But hearts will find no second Spring.

AT THE CROSS.

I

My heart is like a ruined shrine
 With rain-drops dripping through :
 Ah ! surely, now, these eyes of mine
 Have work enough to do.

II

Like rats in some deserted hall
 Dark thoughts my soul possess :
 The meat I eat is turned to gall,
 My drink to bitterness.

III

O Jesus, hear the call of us,
 And make our spirits glad ;
 For Thou did'st die for all of us,
 But chiefly for the bad.

IV

O Father, from Thy pure abode,
Look down and pity me ;
A pilgrim on the Heavenly road,
I bring my sins to Thee !

O LIFELESS HAND.

I

O LIFELESS hand beyond the grave !
O beckoning dream that haunts my sleep !
I knew 'twas brave whate'er it gave,
 I knew its gifts were good to keep.
A monarch's crown, a miser's gold,
Are less avail when all is told.

II

A flower, a toy, a useless band,
 A waif a child would cast aside ;
Once touched by Love's transcendent hand,
 Become the gems of choicest pride !
And thus I clasp them close and strong,
 And sing, with sobs, my evening song.

III

O angel hair ! O golden crest !
From saintly brows the light was torn ;
I hide the sunbeams in my breast,
And then look out for break of morn.
Oh hush, my heart, 'tis darkness yet ;
Too well we know the sun has set !

A DIRGE.

I

ART thou lonely in thy tomb ?
 Art thou cold in such a gloom ?
 Rouse thee, then, and make me room—

Miserere Domine !

II

Phantoms vex thy virgin sleep,
 Nameless things around thee creep,
 Yet be patient, do not weep—

Miserere Domine !

III

O be faithful ! O be brave !
 Naught shall harm thee in thy grave ;
 Let the restless spirits rave—

Miserere Domine !

IV

When my pilgrimage is done,
When the grace of God is won,
I will come to thee, my nun—

Miserere Domine !

V

Like a priest, in flowing vest,
Like a pale, unbidden guest,
I will come to thee and rest—

Miserere Domine !

THE TOKEN FLOWER.



I

I SENT my Love a lily fair,
To show my thoughts were pure and white ;
She twined it in her yellow hair,
And wore it in the dance at night ;
And then I knew she loved me well,
And prized me more than tongue could tell.

II

I sent my Love a rose-bud red,
That dared not yet its depths disclose ;
Before three little days had sped
She sent me back the perfect rose ;
'Twas like an answer to my thought,
And told me, love was fancy-fraught.

III

Now, she is dead, and I am left—
A tombstone on an early grave !
Oh ! though of all my joys bereft,
The wreath of love, till death, I save ;
And keep as symbols we shall meet
The gentle rose and lily sweet.

A SONG OF DEATH

I

THERE is no glory but the grave,
 And power and pomp are idle toys;
 There is no garland for the brave
 But such as decks the brows of boys.

II

The birds may sing their sylvan songs ;
 The breeze may pipe from land to land ;
 To me they prate of Nature's wrongs,
 And not of love or love's command ;
 My blue-eyed darling she is dead,
 And she has gone to her death-bed.

III

And will the Spring come back once more ?
 And will the earth be fair to see ?
 Ah ! hush my heart ; thy season's o'er—
 No Summer comes to thine or thee.

IV

The sun may rise—the sun may set—
The sun may sink in amber air ;
But I shall sigh to see him die,
And madly mourn for golden hair !
My blue-eyed darling she is dead,
And she has gone to her death-bed.

LINES TO A BEAUTIFUL SICILIAN.



I

I HAVE a meaning in my thought,
Thou lady fair and bright,
Would touch the tendrils of thy soul,
If thou could'st read it right;
A secret fire—a wild desire—
That haunts me day and night.

II

Why art thou sad, thou lonely boy ?
I hear a soft voice sigh ;
It is my heart, thou lady dear,
That bleeds and will not die ;
My wounded heart (with Love's own dart)
That bleeds and will not die.

III

One night it heard a whispered word
Thy lips replied to me;
And now it thinks itself a bird,
And fain would fly to thee.
It flaps its wings; it sobs and sings—
It dares not fly to thee!

THE KNIGHT AND THE LADY

I

THE fairest fair in all the land
 A baron's daughter, pure and tall—
 She held the hearts of men in thrall ;
 But coldly kept her virgin hand.
 There came a knight of low degree,
 Who wooed her long and tenderly.

II

His fight he fought ; his song he sang ;
 And all for Love's and ladies' sake :
 A new Sir Launcelot of the Lake,
 His fame a nine days' wonder rang ;
 He conquered men and ransom got,
 But Friedolin he conquered not.

III

She conquered him ; with look askance
She heard his plaint and murmured low :
Then with a look, but ne'er a blow,
She put to scorn his sword and lance.
He could not fight with lady bright,
But he could sing, this faithful knight.

IV

‘O lady rare !’ he sang in prayer.
‘O lady sweet ! give ear to me !
I bow, but only bow to thee !’
And then he made a sign in air.
The fairest Fair in all the land,
She would not yield her virgin hand.

V

For Love’s a tyrant—men are weak ;
The girl was proud and scorned the boy ;
In hawks and hounds was all her joy ;
She laughed and blushed from cheek to cheek ;
‘ You lose your time, Sir Knight,’ said she,
‘ My wee, white fawn doth wait for me ! ’

VI

' Your wee, white fawn is dead I fear;
Your cruel words have killed it quite !
And then he sighed this faithful knight ;
' Your wee, white fawn is bleeding near !'
Not so,' said she. ' My heart, I vow,
Is dead because you scorn it now ! '

FRIEDOLIN.

I

An exile from thy court serene
 This many a day in grief and shame,
 I still obey thee, oh, my Queen !
 And love and honour thee all the same.

II

What pleasures dwell in Beauty-Place !
 What Parliaments of Passion meet !
 The goodly youths bespeak thy grace,
 And all their vows by rote repeat.

III

And I, poor wretch ! (who loved thee so,
 The others' love was poor and mean,)
 Must languish here in helpless woe,
 An exile from an angry Queen !

IV

Oh, think thee, liege, with sword and lute
I served thee well through faithful years;
And now those strings are cold and mute,
That sword is wet with manly tears !

V

Oh, take my sword and dub me knight,
That I thy true-love still may be;
Or, take my sword and kill me quite,
That I may die for love of thee !

CHAINS.



I

O BLONDALINE ! thy locks of hair
 I feel them clasping me ;
These are the golden chains I wear,
 Which bind my soul to thee.

II

O Blondaline ! release me not ;
 I would not, now, be free ;
I love the pains of these my chains
 Which bind my soul to thee !

AVOWALS.

I

SHALL I tell thee all I know ?
 Wilt thou hear it from my lips ?
 On some bosoms white as snow
 There is danger as in ships ;
 And we fall from happy places,
 For the pride of pretty faces.

II

Little souls may love and laugh ;
 Grander ones will weep, at times !
 If I write thy epitaph,
 I must praise thee in my rhymes :
 Say how well (as in a ditty),
 Thou didst love me, dear, for pity.

III

Fair thou art; I know it well;
Ah! none fairer shall I find;
Voice so like a fairy-bell
Ne'er was blown upon the wind:
But thy beauty I forsake it,
And thy heart I will not take it!

L' ENVOI.



I

YES, yes; we know our life is such.
Who lives on Love may tremble much.
Who grasps at Joy
May oft destroy
The Butterfly beneath his touch!

II

I hunted mine: my chace is o'er,
And Love's fine lips I'll taste no more.

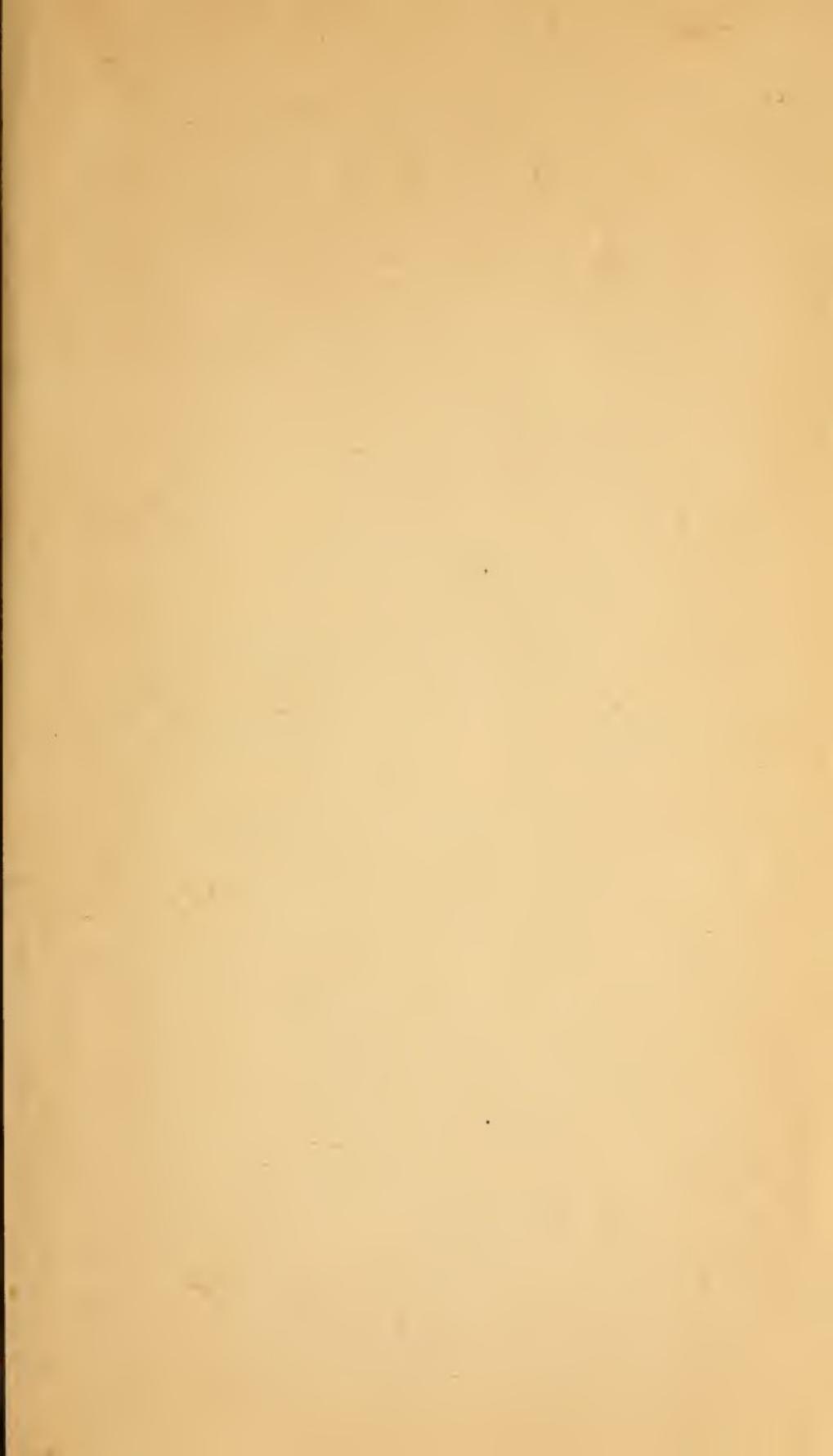
My childhood's prize
Distorted lies—
A beetle blind of both his eyes.

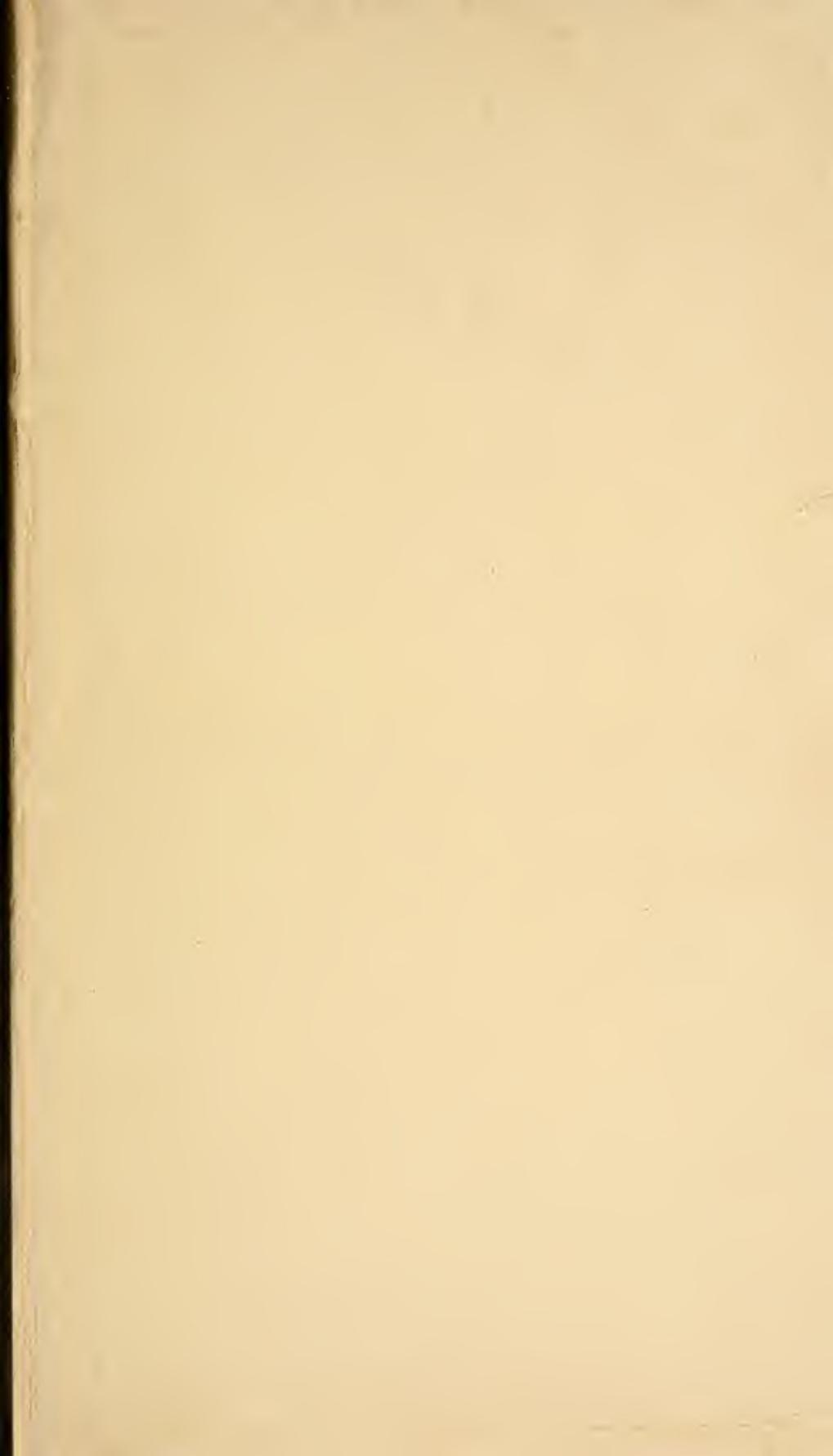
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I've pinned it, reader, in a frame,
And given the thing a learnèd name !

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